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WATERFRONT PUBLIC FORUM APRIL 23, 2009

TRANSCRIPT OF THE ART LEAGUE'S PREPARED REMARKS

“Good evening. Thank you for giving all of us the opportunity to share our ideas here tonight.

My name is Linda Hafer, and I'm the Executive Director of The Art League, a nonprofit visual arts organization. By way of background, The Art League is a 55-year-old institution that has been located in Alexandria for most of its existence—at first in a small gallery on Cameron St.—until The Art League's visionary president, Marian Van Landingham led the effort in the early '70s to convert the old torpedo plant on the waterfront to the Torpedo Factory Art Center with the mission of housing artists' studios, galleries, The Art League Gallery, and The Art League School.

The patronage of the City of Alexandria over the years, chiefly in the form of favorable rent rates, provided foundational support for The Art League's growth and expansion of our school which now requires two additional facilities in Old Town to accommodate our student body. Today, we are following the planning process for the waterfront redevelopment very closely, because 2 of our 3 facilities are located directly in the areas of the waterfront being studied and all 3 of our facilities will be profoundly affected by the outcome of the waterfront redevelopment.

Our 1st facility is the Torpedo Factory Art Center, where we are headquartered with our gallery, several classrooms, an art supply store, and administrative offices. The 2nd is our Duke St. Annex on the corner of Duke St. and South Union, in the former Interarms warehouse. (Our 3rd facility is in North Old Town, bordering the area of waterfront study.)

We expect that we will lose the use of the Duke St. warehouse in the new waterfront plan, and are actively seeking appropriate and sustainable ways to replace that space in close proximity to our Torpedo Factory headquarters.

We currently fill between 8,000-10,000 class seats annually. We feel that there is an important, healthy, symbiotic relationship between The Art League School and the Alexandria business and civic community that we hope to maintain in the future. We know that our students enjoy and contribute to the ambiance of Old Town, and are frequent customers of its stores and restaurants. We know that the local businesses appreciate the sizable and desirable demographic that we bring to Old Town on a weekly basis when our students, members, and patrons come for our programs.

We have built award-winning outreach programs through our collaborations with the City—for example, our SOHO program for at-risk girls with the City's Court Service Unit, and the Art in City Hall program. We're proud to be called upon as a reliable resource by the City, the Alexandria Commission for the Arts, the Chamber of Commerce, and others in the community and beyond.

We would very much like to maintain our presence in this Alexandria community.

As a way of visualizing the possibilities, we have developed a concept drawing of a sample facility that would fit our needs, and maintain and add an active space and a community-focused arts presence on the

new waterfront. I will emphasize that this is only a CONCEPT piece, to help us and others envision what we believe might offer a good solution for both The Art League and the City.

Because we are at an early stage of the process, and have no determination of what area might be available for a consolidated school space, we have taken the footprint of the building we currently lease, and created visual concept of how that might be built out to both serve our needs and benefit the City.

There is a display board in the hallway outside this chamber with a drawing of the concept we have developed. It represents a building that takes advantage of artists' light with classroom windows along the north face; provides a street-front retail component in the form of an art supply store that could be open to the public as well as to our students; and activates the area by locating classrooms/studios with visual appeal to passersby (such as ceramics) along the ground level, along with building aprons suitable for outdoor demos such as glassblowing and plein-air painting.

Because of the level and pace of our traffic and activity, our patron numbers are steady but not overwhelming at any particular time. This type of space use could be considered very beneficial to maintaining a safe and active environment along the waterfront. We have been bringing students into this general area for over 20 years, and my understanding is that it has been a very desirable use for the immediate neighborhood.

Not only does The Art League School bring in a desirable demographic to patronize local businesses, it also provides easy access for local residents to a highly regarded art school, offering affordable classes in virtually all fine art and many fine craft media—an enriching and dynamic resource to the local community. I hope that you will work with The Art League to make it possible for us to secure our presence here in the new waterfront plan.”